

Title: **ISRAEL'S MISERY—GOD'S MERCY**
Text: Exodus 2:23-25 and 3:7-10
Subject: *God's Method of Grace*
Date: Tuesday Evening — May 16, 2006
Tape # Exodus 21

Introduction:

God's ways are never our ways; and our ways are never his ways. If we had our way, we would never do things the way God does them. That fact is never more evident than it is in God's method of grace. But God's way is always best; and, when it is understood by experience, it is sweet beyond description.

Proposition: The Lord God chose the nation of Israel as a typical picture of his people in this world; and all that that nation experienced in Old Testament history exemplifies what chosen sinners experience in grace.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL

God chose Abraham's seed and determined to make of them a great nation and a peculiar people, to whom he would communicate the law and testimony, a people by whom he would keep the heavenly lamp burning until Christ should come. In time, Jacob and his family went down into Egypt. For a long, long time they and their descendants were very happy there.

The land of Goshen was a fruitful, and the Israelites were greatly favored by the Egyptian king. No one living as Israel lived in Egypt would ever dream of leaving. And, I am sure they never thought of leaving that country. They had settled there permanently. They became just like the Egyptians, as far as they could. They were a part of the Egyptian nation. In time, they forgot their origin, forgot God's word to Abraham, and melted into the Egyptian culture. They lost all identity as God's chosen, covenant people. They adopted all the superstitions, idolatries, and iniquities of Egypt. Israel loved the land of Pharaoh and all its ease, wealth, and pleasure.

Though they had forgotten it, the Lord God had declared that their sojourn in Egypt would be for a set time; and that when the appointed time had come he would bring them out of that land (Gen. 15:13-14). All the time Israel was in the land of Israel, though they forgot him, the Lord God was determined to bring them out of by his mighty, stretched out arm. He was determined to separate the precious from the vile, to separate the chosen from the reprobate, to separate Israel from Egypt. He had made a difference between Israel and Egypt; and he meant to make the difference manifest to both.

THE PARALLEL

I am sure you see where I am going. The parallel is obvious to all who know the Scriptures. Scattered among the ruins of Adam's fallen race, God has a people whom he has chosen to be his own peculiar people. At present, they are mixed up with the world. They are in the world and appear to be of the world. Like all others, they are "*children of wrath*." They love the world, love darkness, and love sin. They are happy the way they are. They have no desire to be separated from their lusts, separated from their companions, and separated unto the Lord. They love life in Egypt. But the Lord God has appointed a time, called "*the time of love*," when he will bring his redeemed out from the rest of mankind. He who bought them with blood will deliver them by the power of his omnipotent, irresistible grace.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not make atonement for nothing. He did not die in vain. It is written, "*he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*." The Lord God will yet call each of his sons and daughters out of Egypt, even as he called his Firstborn. He will bring his chosen out of the midst of the people among whom they are sojourning until the time appointed for their emancipation.

BLESSED MISERY

As the appointed day approached, when Israel must come out of Egypt, the Lord graciously prepared them for deliverance by making them want it. God does not save sinner's against their will. He makes them willing in the day of his power. And he did not drag Israel out of Egypt. He made them so miserable in Egypt that they wanted to leave, so miserable that they had to leave. He made them so sick of Egypt that they rejoiced and sang as they left the land they once loved.

How was that accomplished? God sent the Egyptians a king who knew not Joseph. This new Pharaoh was a petty little man, who feared that, some day, when Egypt was at war, Israel might side with Egypt's enemies. He looked upon the Jews as being a great danger, and determined, if he could, to thin their ranks. He issued a barbaric order to slay all the male children born in Israel. Then, hoping to break their spirit effectually, he put them to hard labor, making bricks without straw and building huge structures in the treasure cities of Egypt.

The Israelites became abject slaves. Under brutal taskmasters, the whip fell often and heavily upon their backs. They were required to labor and toil relentlessly, without the slightest reward or reprieve. At last, the yoke of bondage became intolerable, "*and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.*" That brings me to my text (Ex. 2:23-25 and 3:7-10).

(Exodus 2:23-25) "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. (24) And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. (25) And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them.*"

(Exodus 3:7-10) "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

I cannot help thinking of David's words in Psalm 107:11-16.

(Psalms 107:11-16) "Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: (12) Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there* was none to help. (13) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. (14) He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. (15) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! (16) For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder."

Perhaps the Lord has brought you here tonight with a heavy heart, full of soul-trouble, sorrow and distress. Maybe, just maybe he is graciously making you sick of the world and sick of sin. If the Lord God has brought your soul into bondage, perhaps it is because the appointed time of love has come for you, and he will bring you out by his almighty grace this hour!

ISRAEL'S MISERY

First, let me talk to you about Israel's misery. What a mercy it was for them that God brought them into such misery! Their misery squeezed from their hearts a cry to God, a cry that would otherwise never have

been heard. — *“The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning”* (Ex. 2:23-24).

They began to sigh, and to cry, because their time of prosperity was over. The land of Goshen was still very fruitful, but Israel was no longer enriched by it. The country was fair to look upon, but they could not enjoy it. All their prosperity and happiness had departed.

Am I describing you? Once you were very happy, completely satisfied with your life in this world. Now everything has changed. There is no longer any joy to be found in that which once elated you. In fact, everything you once lived for, now causes you nothing but distress and pain.

If that is your case, I cannot tell you how thankful I am for it. I do not know what God has in store for you; but I do know that when God is about to give a man to drink from the cup of salvation, he usually makes him thirst for it first. And he often does that by making every sweet thing bitter to his taste. — When he is about to bring a poor sinner into his banqueting house of grace, he usually makes him hungry. — When he is about to give rest, he fixes it so that you can find none. — When he is about to set the captive free, he makes his chains heavy and his soul dark.

Israel lost their former prosperity. And **they began to feel that they were in bondage.** They had been in Egypt for four hundred years. But up until now, they were noblemen. They were all blood-kin to Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt. He was second only to Pharaoh himself. Every Jew walked through Goshen as an aristocrat. Then, Joseph died, and everything was changed. Now, they are slaves in bitter bondage, completely controlled by others.

Hard laws were made against them. Cruel taskmasters were given authority to enforce those cruel laws. They woke up when they were told to wake up, worked when they were told to work, and slept when they were told to sleep. They were totally under the yoke of cruel oppressors. — I know exactly what they felt at that time. I've been there. Have you?

- A slave to men, to the world!
- Slave to every lust obscene!
- Taken captive by Satan at his will!
- Under the heavy yoke of God's holy law, every word of it written against me!

The children of Israel began to feel the heavy weight **their burdens were too heavy to be borne.** They had worked and toiled hard; but now they were made to serve with rigor. The pain of their bondage was unbearable. Their burden was crushing. They were now in a position where they must have help, help that God alone could give. — O blessed, blessed misery!

As long as you can get along without Christ, you will. As long as you can get along without God, he will let you. As long as you can shift for yourself, he will let you shift your way to hell! But, oh what mercy it is, when he fixes it so that you must have him!

(Psalms 32:3-5) “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. (4) For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. (5) I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.”

I remember all that painful time so vividly that I can speak to some of you like an experienced friend who is well acquainted with the dark road you walk. I know all about your pain and grief. And I know that this is God's way of fetching his own out of Egypt.

Once they were utterly helpless, completely without strength, when there was no help to be had from any other source, then, and only then, did the children of Israel cry out to God for help. So it is with every sinner. No sinner will ever seek the Lord until he is altogether shut up to free grace. You will not come to the throne of grace until you need grace. You will never sue for mercy until you have no other suit to make in the court of heaven.

“To understand these things aright,
This grand distinction should be known:
Though all are sinners in God’s sight,
There are but few so in their own.
To such as these our Lord was sent;
They’re only sinners who repent.

What comfort can a Savior bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost hath made him so.
New life from Him we must receive,
Before for sin we rightly grieve.”

Look back at Exodus 2:23 again. Notice the order in which things are stated there.

- First, “*the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.*”
- Then, “*they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage.*”
- And, “*God heard their groaning.*”

Blessed is that misery that brings me to God! Blessed is that misery that forces me to the throne of grace!
Blessed is that misery that makes me willing to look to Christ!

GOD’S MERCY

Read on. — “*They cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.*” Their misery was the forerunner of God’s mercy.

First, “***their cry came up unto God.***” When it rose up, sharp, and shrill, and intense, it burst through the gates of heaven, and “*came up unto God.*”

(Hebrews 4:16) “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

(Jeremiah 29:10-14) “For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (11) **For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.** (12) **Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.** (13) **And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.** (14) **And I will be found of you, saith the LORD:** and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

(Luke 11:5-13) “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him **at midnight**, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; (6) For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and **I have nothing** to set before him? (7) And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. (8) I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet **because of his importunity he will rise and give him** as many as he needeth. (9) And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; **knock, and it shall be opened unto you.** (10) **For every one that asketh receiveth;** and **he that seeketh findeth;** and **to him that knocketh it shall be opened.** (11) If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? (12) Or if

he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? (13) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more** shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Next, "**and God heard their groaning.**" The God of all grace hears the hearts of needy sinners. He hears the sighs, and groans, and cries of his people.

Sinner, tell God your misery even now, and he will hear your story. Tell him all, for he will hear you. Tell him what it is you want,— what great mercy,— what great forgiveness. Just spread your heart before him. He will be attentive to the voice of your cry.

Having heard their groaning, "**God remembered his covenant.**" I wish I knew how to preach upon that 24th verse: "*God remembered his covenant.*" He looked on the children of Israel, and **he did not remember their declensions**,— their **idols**, — or their transgressions. He remembered his covenant!

If he were to look on you to all eternity, he would see nothing in you but that which he is bound to punish. But when he remembers his covenant, he looks on his dear Son whom he loves, the Lamb, and remembers mercy!

But there is more. — "**And God looked upon the children of Israel.**" He had given them his ear; he had given them his memory; now he gives them his eyes. He stood still, and he looked upon them, in pity and in love; and it is further said, "**And God had respect unto them.**" The margin renders it, "**God knew them.**" He looked upon them and said, "I know them. They are mine!"

GOD'S APPOINTED MAN

And when he looked upon them in mercy, the Lord God sent the man he had appointed to deliver them and sent him to them. That is what we see in Exodus 3. That man, Moses, was Israel's Savior. As such, he is held before us as a delightful type of Christ our Savior.

(Exodus 3:7-10) "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

One who is infinitely greater than Moses has come to deliver us. He is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. **First, remember that Christ, the Savior, is a man like ourselves, fully of sympathy for needy souls.**

Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred
Three Are terrors to my mind.

But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.

This Moses, being a man, yet **clothed with divine authority**, gave himself up to the people entirely. He was such a lover of Israel that he lived entirely for the people, and once, you will remember, he even said,

as he pleaded for them, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." — That is Christ! Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our joy to preach, was really made a curse for us; he actually stood in the sinner's stead, and bore the penalty of the sinner's guilt. Therefore, oh, do trust him!

Last, **Moses brought all Israel the people out of Egypt**, every one of them. He left not one little baby in Egypt, not so much as a sheep or a goat remained there. He said, "*There shall not a hoof be left behind.*" All that belonged to Israel went marching out when Moses led the way.

And God's elect, all of Israel, all Christ's redeemed shall all come out of Egypt. Pharaoh's power — the devil's power — cannot hold the very least of them in captivity; not even a bone of one of God's children shall be left in the grasp of death and hell. They shall come again from the hand of the enemy, come out completely, and come out with great substance!

The Lord God has laid help upon One who is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people. Oh, may he give you grace to trust him!

Amen.